



Defining
EXCELLENCE
in the 21st Century

Network Director's Update

September 2011



National News: *(Click on titles to read full press release)*

[HUD, VA to Provide Permanent Housing, Case Management to Nearly 100 Homeless Veterans](#) - U.S. Housing and Urban Development Secretary Shaun Donovan and U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary Eric K. Shinseki announced today that HUD will provide nearly

\$1 million to public housing authorities in the District of Columbia, Tallahassee, Fla., and Providence, R.I. to supply permanent housing and case management for nearly 100 homeless veterans in America. The funding is provided through the Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing Program (HUD-VASH) funding to support homeless veterans. (9/19/11)

[Two VA Executives Honored with 'Service to America' Medals](#) - A Vietnam Veteran whose career has focused on helping war Veterans at Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) community Vet Centers around the country and a VA chief financial officer who led the agency to streamline operations and reduce costs are among nine federal officials being honored with Service to America Medals. (9/19/11)

[Veterans Gather for Summer Sports Clinic](#) - Today, more than 100 recently injured Veterans are gathered in San Diego for the National Veterans Summer Sports Clinic, a special rehabilitation-related sporting event, sponsored by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). (9/16/11)

[Retroactive Traumatic Injury Benefits No Longer Just For OEF/OIF Injuries](#) - The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is extending retroactive traumatic injury benefits to Servicemembers who suffered qualifying injuries during the period Oct. 7, 2001 to Nov. 30, 2005, regardless of the geographic location where the injuries occurred. (9/16/11)

[VA Ranked Best Place to Launch a Career in the Federal Government](#) - The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) was ranked the "Best Place to Launch a Career in the Federal Government" in a recent report by the Partnership for Public Service based on 2010 data. (9/16/11)

[Twenty VA Medical Centers Make The Joint Commission's Top Performers List](#) - Twenty Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical centers from across the Nation were

recognized by The Joint Commission today as Top Performers on Key Quality Measures for 2010. (9/14/11)

[VA Observes Suicide Prevention Week](#) - In observance of Suicide Prevention Week (September 4-10, 2011), the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is educating individuals and communities across the country about VA's suicide prevention resources and the steps to take to help Veterans in crisis. (9/13/11)

[Nasal Insulin Spray Shows Promise In Treatment of Alzheimer's](#) - A small pilot study led by a Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) researcher found that a nasal insulin spray improved memory, thinking skills, and functional ability in people with mild cognitive impairment and Alzheimer's disease. (9/13/11)

[Statement from Veterans Affairs Secretary Eric K. Shinseki on the American Jobs Act](#) - Yesterday, the President sent the American Jobs Act to Congress for consideration. With the American Jobs Act, the President is again demonstrating unwavering support of Veterans and of business by putting forward an aggressive plan that will help create new jobs for Veterans and boost the American economy. (9/13/11)

[VA Announces Expansion of Virtual Lifetime Electronic Record](#) - The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced today it will expand its pilot for the Virtual Lifetime Electronic Record (VLER), which enables sharing of Veterans' health records. (9/8/11)

[VA Streamlines Online Applications for Health Benefits Renewal](#) - Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has automated its online Health Benefits Renewal (10-10EZ) form as part of its ongoing effort to streamline access to benefits. (9/8/11)

[VA Begins New Program to Serve Veterans Living Abroad](#) - The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has instituted a new program to provide comprehensive compensation and pension (C&P) examinations to U.S. Veterans living overseas. (9/7/11)

[VA's Telephone Service Helps Family Members Encourage Veterans to Seek Medical Care](#) - The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has launched a telephone service, Coaching into Care, to provide assistance to family members and friends trying to encourage their Veteran to seek health care for possible readjustment and mental health issues. (9/6/11)

[VA Posts Online List of Ships Associated with Presumptive Agent Orange Exposure](#) - Veterans who served aboard

U.S. Navy and Coast Guard ships operating on the waters of Vietnam between January 9, 1962, and May 7, 1975, may be eligible to receive Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) disability compensation for 14 medical conditions associated with presumptive exposure to Agent Orange. (9/2/11)

[Over \\$2.2 Billion in Retroactive Agent Orange Benefits Paid to 89,000 Vietnam Veterans and Survivors for Presumptive Conditions](#) - Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki announced today that more than \$2.2 billion in retroactive benefits has already been paid to approximately 89,000 Vietnam Veterans and their survivors who filed claims related to one of three new Agent Orange presumptive conditions. (8/31/11)

VISN 19:

Focusing on your Health:

September is Suicide Prevention Month

Every Veteran suicide is tragic and VA is committed to preventing suicide through outreach, counseling, mental health care, research and taking proactive steps to identify at-risk Veterans.



VA's basic strategy for suicide prevention requires ready access to high quality mental health and other health care services supplemented by programs designed to help individuals and families engage in care and to address suicide prevention in high-risk patients.

VA's 24/7 Suicide Prevention Hotline, 1-800-273-TALK, has fielded more than 403,000 calls from Veterans and family members and is credited with saving the lives of more than 7,000 lives. Callers talk to a trained VA professional who can contact and dispatch emergency responders to Veteran's location to intervene if necessary. All callers are referred their Suicide Prevention Coordinator, who will follow up with the Veteran and coordinate appropriate care and services.

VA has implemented screening and assessment processes throughout the system to assist in the identification of patients at risk for suicide. A chart "flagging" system has been developed to assure continuity of care and provide awareness among care-givers.

VA also educates its employees in identifying at-risk veterans. Operation S.A.V.E. – Signs of Suicidal thinking, Ask the questions, Verify the experience with the Veteran, and Expedite or Escort to help is one such program.

VA is determined to find better and more effective ways of identifying high-risk Veterans and deliver effective

treatment and services through advancements in research. VA scientists are currently conducting epidemiology studies, screening programs, structured cognitive therapy, outreach and restriction initiatives.

Whether you're a Veteran, or a friend or family member concerned about one, confidential assistance is only a call or click away. For more information about the Veterans Crisis Line, visit www.VeteransCrisisLine.net. For more information about VA's mental health resources, visit www.mentalhealth.va.gov.

September is National Cholesterol Education Month Why **Cholesterol Matters!**

As the summer slowly came to an end and the new school year begins it's time to educate yourself on the effects of cholesterol on your health. High cholesterol is one of the main controllable risk factors for coronary heart disease, heart attack and stroke. So as you take this time to think about your cholesterol and whether you are at risk ask yourself two questions. Do I know my numbers? Am I at risk?

Know Your Numbers

If you don't know your blood cholesterol levels, make a pledge to get tested in September. Cholesterol is measured by a ratio of blood cholesterol in milligrams (mg) to deciliter (DL) of blood. Your doctor will most likely look at scores for total cholesterol, LDL, HDL, and triglycerides.

Know Your Risk Factors

It's important to know whether or not you are at risk for heart disease. Risk factors for heart disease include things such as smoking, high blood pressure, low HDL, high LDL, diabetes, family history, and age. The greater the number of these risk factors you have, the greater your risk for heart disease. In addition, people with a previous history of heart attack, stroke, carotid artery disease or artery blockage in the neck, and peripheral artery disease or blockages in the extremities such as arms and legs, are considered at high risk for heart disease.

Eastern Colorado Health Care System



Denver, CO – Replacement Medical Center Facility

The Denver VAMC (parent Eastern Colorado Health Care System) provides monthly updates on the status of the Denver Replacement Hospital. Updates are distributed via e-mail monthly and can be found on www.denver.va.gov or on Facebook WWW.facebook.com/denverva. Also check out our new brochure [here](#) or at www.denver.va.gov/projecteagle.



P R O J E C T E A G L E U P D A T E

The last two months have been very busy for the Joint Venture Team, Kiewit-Turner, and the Medical Center project staff. The remodeling of the former UPI Building is progressing. The east end of the building is the area of most notable activity. An additional elevator and set of stairs is being added due to the potential number of occupants in the building given all the conference rooms and training areas. A large pile of dirt is amassed on the southern part of the campus from the excavation necessary to install these items.

Another major effort has been the development of signage and way finding strategies. For example, the North Entrance will be marked with the flags of all of the Services while the South Entrance will be marked with the symbols of the Services. If an employee is trying to help a patient find their way, they may ask them "Did you come in the flag entrance or the symbol entrance?" These types of details will help the campus be more easily navigated, and instructions for different areas easier to understand.

And finally, there have been multiple user group meetings to design and plan the Community Living Center (CLC) that will be on the north of 17th Place. This is a 30 bedroom unit and will be very different from our current CLC. There will be 3 pods of 10 resident rooms each with its own living room, dining room, den, and kitchen area. 2 of the pods will be on the first floor and the 3rd pod will be on second floor. The goal is to make the environment very home-like since the CLC is intended to function as a transitional area from hospital to home.

There is also a community center within the CLC with areas for social functions and group activities. Outdoor space is being reserved for gardens and patios so the residents can enjoy our beautiful

Colorado weather. Patients and their families will have the opportunity to cook meals in the kitchen. Nothing like homemade chicken noodle soup! The CLC staff is very excited about this new model of care.

Denver VA Hosts 3rd Annual "Bare Leg Run" Race to Benefit Colorado Disabled Veterans attending National Rehabilitation Events

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Denver Medical Center will host the 3rd Annual **Bare Leg Run: Bare Your Legs for Those Who Bore Arms**, a 5K walk, run and roll plus 10K Handcycle event at Denver's City Park on Saturday, October 29, 2011. This year's event will also feature a Kids' Fun Run. The event is open to the public and registration is now open at www.runningguru.com.

WHAT: Bare Leg Run: Bare Your Legs for Those Who Bore Arms

WHEN: Saturday, October 29, 2011 at 9 a.m.

WHERE: Denver City Park-Start and Finish just south of the Pavilion

All proceeds from this annual event are used to send disabled Colorado Veterans to various VA National Events where they can experience adaptive rehabilitative activities. The National Events include the National Veterans Wheelchair Games (hosted in Denver in 2010), the National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic, National Veterans Golden Age Games, National Veterans Creative Arts Festival, the National Veterans Summer Sports Clinic and the National Veterans TEE Tournament. These events serve as an important therapeutic tool for disabled veterans. Great prizes and event a costume contest await the participants!

REGISTER:

Register online at www.runningguru.com, keyword search "Bare Leg Run" or in person in race day. **Discounted registration for those registering by October 1st.** More information at www.rockymountainveterans.org

Grand Junction VAMC



In the month of September, the GJVAMC participated in several low key, high impact events.

Grand Junction VAMC kicked off their flu shot clinic and offered a successful "drive-thru flu clinic" once again. This event was highlighted on the GJVAMC Facebook page.



The Grand Junction VAMC has updated and revamped their website to be more Veteran friendly for non-enrolled Veterans. Check it out at www.grandjunction.va.gov.

Grand Junction VAMC was honored to receive a \$1,000 donation from a spouse in memory of a former hospice patient to show appreciation of the care he received.



A fun event was enjoyed by all during the annual all employee and volunteer picnic.

The Grand Junction VAMC kicked off the virtual lifetime electronic records program (VLER), a voluntary program that will allow VA to share a "snapshot" of our Veterans medical situation with several emergency rooms on the Western Slope if the Veteran needs to visit one.



Grand Junction VAMC ended a busy month with a POW/MIA recognition and remembrance luncheon.

VA Montana Health Care System:



VA Montana launches Project ARCH

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Montana Health Care System (MTHCS) launched Project ARCH, or Access Received Closer to Home in Billings, Mont. providing area Veterans with a new option for health care services. This three-year pilot project allows eligible Veterans to receive care through a non-VA health care provider who has contracted with VA.

Project ARCH was launched August 29 and is intended to improve access for eligible Veterans by connecting them to health care services closer to their homes. Through Project ARCH, Veterans will gain local convenience without sacrificing high quality care.

VA will ensure that participating Veterans' treatment is closely coordinated between the contracted provider (Humana Veterans Healthcare Service) and VA, so Veterans in the program experience seamless, high quality health care.



Billings is one of five VA sites selected for the three-year pilot project which will continue through fiscal year 2014. VA has allocated more than \$1 million for Project ARCH through the remainder of this fiscal year (September 30).

Veterans are eligible to participate in the program if they both reside in a location where one of the five Project ARCH pilot sites are located AND are enrolled in the VA health care system when the program starts. In addition, the law requires participating Veterans meet at least one of the following criteria:

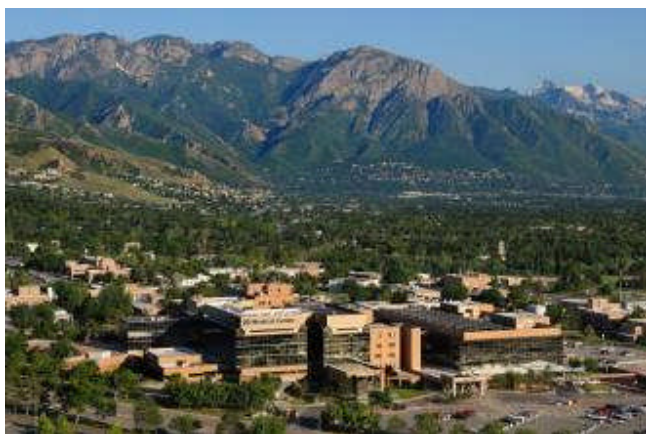
- Live more than 60 minutes drive time from the nearest VA health care facility providing primary care services, or
- Live more than 120 minutes drive time from the nearest VA health care facility providing acute hospital care, or
- Live more than 240 minutes drive time from the nearest VA health care facility providing tertiary care

Any Veteran who meets the Project ARCH eligibility criteria and wishes to participate should discuss the program further during their next primary care clinic visit at a VAMTHCS clinic.

For additional information about Project ARCH or for information about Project ARCH eligibility, please contact Carrie Walby, Project ARCH program support assistant, at 406-447-6820.

It is intended to improve access for eligible Veterans by connecting them to health care services closer to their homes. Through Project ARCH, Veterans will gain local convenience without sacrificing high quality care.

VASLCHCS



Valor House: Homeless Veteran Safe Haven

18 months from now a dusty lot on the grounds of the George E. Wahlen VA Medical Center will be transformed into a home for 72 homeless Veterans. Valor House will

start to take shape and so will the uncertain future of so many of our nation's heroes.

VA Salt Lake City Health Care System in partnership with the Salt Lake City Housing Authority broke ground on the new transitional housing facility in front of countless community partners, dedicated VA homeless staff, local media and other VIPs.



Valor House will guide Veterans from dependence to independence through clinical case management, peer support groups, life skills education and vocational rehabilitation. We know it takes a community and caring partners within that community to successfully guide and care for our homeless Veterans.

VA Salt Lake City Taking Outreach to the Next Level

VA Salt Lake City HCS took enrollment, providers and schedulers on the road Sunday, September 11th to the Utah State Fair to make it as easy as possible for Veterans to sign up for benefits.

VA staff was successful in enrolling over 40 Veterans in the system to include a brief wellness exam followed by a scheduled first appointment.



The event was a great example of what VA staff can pull off with teamwork and dedication to the mission. One VA was there in full force educating, evaluating and ensuring our Veterans are cared for. VASLCHCS will continue this type of outreach event in the future. It was wildly successful and we know Veterans truly appreciated the effort and opportunity.

Sheridan VAMC:



CHALENG 2011

The Sheridan VA Community Homeless Assessment Local Education Networking Group was held on September 28, 2011. A total of twenty-five participants attended the meeting including Community partnerships, members of the Sheridan VA staff from the Homeless Veterans Workgroup, and the Sheridan VA Homeless Champion, Deb Hirschman, Medical Center Director.

"We look forward to this meeting every year, so that we can gather together various community organizations and staff. Our goal is to have a plan for approaching homelessness in our area." Said Director Hirschman

The meeting opened with a presentation on the history of CHALENG and explanation of the CHALENG Process. Homeless staff members gave an overview of their roles with the Healthcare for Homeless Veterans Program and accomplishments over the last year. The participants engaged in an exercise involving introductions and networking.

The top three needs from the 2010 Assessment were reviewed and following the participant exercise the consensus determined the top three needs for 2011.

All participants completed the CHALENG Assessment and the results will be published in the Eighteenth Annual CHALENG Progress Report for FY 2011. The report will also include the findings from fifty surveys completed by Homeless and former Homeless Veterans from the two Grant & Per Diem Projects and residents from the Domiciliary Care for Homeless Veterans Program.

Will Banks, Homeless Veterans Grant & Per Diem program manager oversee the CHALENG meeting and documentation. "I find this document and process to be extremely helpful as we move forward and work to end homelessness among Veterans."

Cheyenne VAMC:




V.A. Hosts Third Annual 'Welcome Home'


This past month, around 400 veterans and members of the U.S. military gathered at Harvest Farm in Wellington, Colorado.

The third annual 'Welcome Home' event kicked off at ten in the morning and lasted until about three in the afternoon. It celebrated the men and women who served in Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation New Dawn. Their family members were also invited to attend.

The event had everything from live music and kids games to a barbeque and corn maze. Cheyenne VA spokesman Andrew Ruben said Saturday's event was planned for about 400 to attend, and veterans of a variety of ages joined the festivities.

About 3,400 veterans are enrolled for care with the Cheyenne VA, which serves a region including 18,500 veterans in parts of Wyoming, Nebraska and Colorado.





**Defining
EXCELLENCE
in the 21st Century**

VA Rocky Mountain Network 19 Network Director Update is published monthly

4100 East Mississippi Avenue, Suite 1100
Glendale, CO 80246

303-756-9279
visn19.va.gov

Editor: Anita Urdiales